

# University of Calgary

## Department of Sociology

### Curriculum Review Report

#### November 2016

#### **Context**

Sociology combines the rigour of a scientific discipline with a concern for social relevance. It emerged in the nineteenth century as an attempt to understand the transition from traditional to modern society. Contemporary sociologists study the ways in which social structures, social processes and cultural products constrain and enable human activity, using a range of empirical methods (including ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, surveys, statistical analysis, and analysis of cultural products). Sociologists ask how class, gender, race, ethnicity, age and geographic region shape people's lives and affect access to scarce resources like wealth, power and prestige as they explore the nature and operation of the social institutions that constitute Canadian and other societies. Sociologists study international processes, like migration and international development, and examine the linkages between global and local levels.

The undergraduate Sociology program at the University of Calgary strives to cultivate students' sociological imaginations by offering a range of opportunities to think sociologically and to use different theoretical approaches, research methods and data-analysis techniques. Our program provides a strong foundation in sociological theory and research methods and invites students to explore diverse approaches and topic areas within the field of sociology. Our courses promote co-learning, critical thinking, effective communication, team skills and adaptability, assets that many potential employers look for in graduates. We emphasize community engagement and global citizenship.

There has been a significant growth in student participation in the Sociology program in recent years, which went from 401 majors in 2011 to 606 majors in 2015; as well, sociology courses are popular elective courses and our lower level courses attract large numbers of students majoring in other fields. This growth has put pressure on the program to ensure enough sections of core courses to accommodate the increased number of majors and has necessitated some redeployment of resources in order to meet learning objectives across the program.

The Sociology Department curriculum review took place in 2015/2016.

Unit Lead:	Erin Gibbs Van Brunshot
Review Lead:	Liza McCoy
Review Assistant:	Laurent Wall
Student Assistants:	Sarah Hogendorp and Rebecca Richards
Review Team:	Faculty members of the Department of Sociology

## Guiding Questions

1. In what ways do our courses contribute to our program objectives?

What are our strengths? Gaps? Highlights and problem areas for students?

2. How well does the present structure of prerequisites function to meet student needs?

Do prerequisite courses provide students with the information and skills needed for success in higher-level courses?

Are there any prerequisites that are not needed and may unnecessarily restrict the ways students can move through the program?

Are there prerequisites that should be added?

Could an alternative set of prerequisites be established for Law & Society majors wishing to register in 400-level Sociology courses associated with the Criminology concentration?

3. Is there a central core of common content and/or learning activities that should be offered in all required core courses that are taught in multiple sections, by different instructors (SOC 201, SOC 313, SOC 311, SOC 315, SOC 331, SOC 333)?

What currently is the overlap in content and/or learning activities among different sections of the same course?

What are the significant points of difference?

## Action Plan 2016-2021

Recommendation	Action Items	Responsible	Time frame/ Target date
1. Revise Program Learning Outcomes to reflect outcomes of curriculum review process.	<p>Hold discussion in Department meeting</p> <p>Develop and approve revised PLOs.</p>	<p>Curriculum Review Lead</p> <p>Department</p>	<p>6 months</p> <p>1 year</p>
2. Expand, revise and regularly update the Undergraduate section of the Department web page. Make the Department web page a key resource for Sociology students.	<p>Review information currently available; identify gaps and inaccuracies.</p> <p>Revise and/or write new program information and related material.</p> <p>Maintain up-to-date student information web pages.</p>	<p>Head-designated faculty member of UGSC</p> <p>UGSC + Communications Committee</p> <p>UGSC, Communications Committee + Admin. Staff</p>	<p>1 year</p> <p>2 years + ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
3. Develop a Department policy on prerequisites and an updated prerequisite structure.	<p>Develop prerequisite policy.</p> <p>Make calendar changes as required for conformity with policy.</p> <p>Work with LWSO to determine alternative access to SOCI courses for LWSO students.</p>	<p>Curriculum Review Lead, URGC, Department</p> <p>URGC</p> <p>URGC</p>	<p>1 year</p> <p>2 years</p> <p>2 years</p>
4. Eliminate waitlists for core courses.	<p>Increase course offerings of core courses.</p>	<p>Head</p>	<p>2 years</p>

Recommendation	Action Items	Responsible	Time frame/ Target date
5. Develop and maintain an appropriate level of alignment across different instructors' versions of core courses.	<p>Establish core teaching groups.</p> <p>Develop and implement plans for alignment across core course sections.</p>	<p>Head</p> <p>Core teaching groups</p>	<p>Done</p> <p>2 years + ongoing</p>
6. Coordinate and promote the accessibility of writing and research skill development resources for use in undergraduate courses.	<p>Establish faculty committee to support writing skills development.</p> <p>Investigate resources for students and faculty currently available in the University.</p> <p>Post relevant resources or links on Sociology undergraduate web pages.</p> <p>Share information about writing-related teaching resources and strategies with Sociology faculty.</p> <p>Identify resources to be developed at Program level.</p> <p>Apply for resource-creation grant, if warranted.</p>	<p>Head</p> <p>Writing Skills Development Committee (WSDC)</p> <p>WSDC</p> <p>WSDC</p> <p>WSDC</p> <p>WSDC</p>	<p>Done</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>1 year + ongoing</p> <p>1 year + ongoing</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>2 years</p>
7a. Change SOCI 205 (Canadian Society) to a 300-level course.	Prepare CARC submission.	UGSC	6 months
7b. Drop tutorials from SOCI 201.	Prepare CARC submission.	UGSC	6 months

Recommendation	Action Items	Responsible	Time frame/ Target date
7c. Add prerequisites to SOCI 401.	Prepare CARC submission.	UGSC	6 months
7d. Investigate the feasibility of a new concentration in the area of Social Inequality and Social Justice.	Research student interest in new concentration.	UGSC	1 year
	Determine whether to go ahead with new concentration; develop proposal (if warranted).	UGSC/ Department	2 years
	Propose new concentration to CARC (if warranted).	UGSC	2 years
	Develop new courses for concentration (if warranted).	UGSC	2 years
	Propose new courses to CARC (if warranted).	UGSC	2 years
7e. Develop 500-level courses to enhance student experience at the highest undergraduate levels.	Establish expectations for 500-level courses.	Department/ UGSC	1 year
	Identify suitable 600-level courses for joint 500/600 delivery.	Director of Graduate Studies	1 year
	Offer 500-level access to graduate courses on a trial basis.	Individual instructors	2 years
	Develop new 500-level courses, as appropriate.	Individual instructors	5 years

Recommendation	Action Items	Responsible	Time frame/ Target date
7f. Investigate whether the Faculty of Arts Peer Mentoring program can be used in the Sociology Department.	<p>Set up information session for Sociology faculty.</p> <p>Decide whether Sociology will take part in program.</p> <p>Arrange participation of Sociology students and instructors in program, if warranted.</p>	<p>Head</p> <p>Department</p> <p>Individual instructors</p>	<p>6 months</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>2 years</p>